



# Australian Bureau of Statistics

## 1376.0 - Local Government and ABS (Newsletter), Mar 2003

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Local Government and ABS is a quarterly newsletter created by the Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) aimed at helping the Local Government Sector use statistics to assist with planning and other community servicing decisions.

A specific aim of this newsletter is to help you easily find information on the ABS website. It explains the structure of the ABS website and provides direct electronic links to statistical series of use to local government. Electronic links are written in blue and underlined and can be activated using the mouse button. Statistical terms are also explained to help make sense of more complex data.

Local Government and ABS provides a central contact point where you can provide your views and suggestions as to how the ABS can better assist Local Government.

We encourage you to forward this newsletter to others and post it on your bulletin board. Anyone is welcome to receive Local Government and ABS. To subscribe, just send an email to [jeff.bulger@abs.gov.au](mailto:jeff.bulger@abs.gov.au) with "subscribe Local Government and ABS" in the subject line. If you no longer wish to receive this newsletter please unsubscribe by sending an email to [jeff.bulger@abs.gov.au](mailto:jeff.bulger@abs.gov.au) with "unsubscribe Local Government and ABS" in the subject line.

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### Welcome

Welcome to the first edition of Local Government and ABS, an initiative of the Australian Bureau of Statistics to improve our services to the Local Government Sector.

The introduction of a specialist newsletter for local government is a direct outcome of the Review of the ABS Relationship with Local Government, a major consultation project we undertook with councils across Australia. The Review highlighted the need to better inform and educate local government organisations about ABS services and how statistics can assist a range of activities from strategic planning to determining the location of council services. Another outcome of this review is the appointment of a **Local Government Sector Account Manager** within the ABS to facilitate the delivery of better information and education solutions for councils and their staff.

We hope that this initiative leads to a better understanding of, and increased use of statistics in the decision making processes in Local Government and that you utilise the Newsletter to tell us what further service improvements you would like to see from the ABS. Contact details are provided on the final page.

We hope you enjoy reading Local Government and ABS and find it useful.

## Do you know our Website?

The ABS website can be found at [www.abs.gov.au](http://www.abs.gov.au). Electronic links take you to the various sections of the website where you can find data from our publications as well as information about the ABS. These links are duplicated in various places so that you can access the relevant site using differing paths. A large amount of information is available free.

The structure of the website is basically separated into 12 sections. Sections Local Government will find useful are listed below:

<b>Home -</b>	general information showing the current day's releases as well as recent releases. Links are also provided to Statistical Products and Services.
<b>Statistics -</b>	Free summary information including: Main Features - summary of findings from many ABS publication; <b>Media Releases</b> - one page summary of key issues; specifically written Feature Articles; links to popular statistical series as well as extensive linking between related information and <b>Australia Now</b> including articles from ABS publications and Year Book Australia. AusStats is a subscription service which provides time series information as well as all ABS publications from 1998 onwards in Adobe Acrobat format (.pdf).
<b>News -</b>	news relating to updates and recent and future releases including <b>Media Releases</b> . <b>Newsletters</b> (including this newsletter) are useful for general information and electronic links.
<b><u>Products and Services</u> -</b>	a complete list of all ABS products and services including how to get ABS statistics, the ABS standard product range on-line (AusStats) as well as details of release dates.
<b><u>About Statistics</u> -</b>	background information regarding <b>concepts, classifications and standards</b> of ABS data as well as the Directory of Statistical Sources.
<b>Themes -</b>	general information from a variety of surveys grouped by topic with some regional data available from the <b>Regional Statistics Program</b> and view selected data items available across Australia.
<b>Census -</b>	<b>2001</b> and <b>1996</b> Census data (including some free data as well as background and contact information)
<b>Contact the ABS -</b>	telephone numbers and email contacts as well as locations for all ABS offices.
<b>Help -</b>	search tips for finding data; downloading and using files; using AusStats.

More details regarding the composition of the various sections and best use will be provided in future issues of Local Government and ABS.

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## Links to take you to Free Population Census datas for your council area

An extensive range of free data from the 2001 Population Census is available via the **Census** section of the ABS website. Census Snapshots and Basic Community Profiles for various geographic areas are available free of charge down to the Statistical Local Area level. Indigenous Profiles are free down to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Commission (ATSIC) region level.

Census Snapshots are designed to provide an easy to read general overview of an area. They contain a summary of key population characteristics such as person counts, age, income, birthplace and ancestry data for a selected geographic region .

Basic Community Profiles provide more information on the key population characteristics of persons, families and dwellings covering most topics on the census form. They are provided in Excel spreadsheet format. Statistical Local Areas can be downloaded and added together to provide a range of regions including Local Government Areas.

The Census Snapshot and Basic Community Profile for each area appear on the same screen. Area selections have been simplified by using a simple 'drill-down' map system stopping when you reach the particular area of interest (**Main Areas (locations) - By Map** ). Alternatively, the location name can be used (**Main Areas (locations) - By Name**). Please be aware that the Basic Community Profile for an area can easily be missed however as it is at the top of the page as a file to be downloaded. Prices, if applicable, are clearly marked on each screen.

In addition Main Features providing summary information from statistical publications as well as **a range of reference information** covering definitions and data issues are also free.

Similar free information is available for the **1996 Census** for comparison purposes.

## Recent releases

The Times Series Profile (TSP) was released on 28/01/03 and contain approximately 22 tables similar to those in the Basic Community Profiles. This series contains data (where the classifications are comparable) from the 1991, 1996 and 2001 Censuses and are available down to Statistical Local Area level as well as aggregated areas of interest to individual clients. Priced at \$10 per selected area, the profiles provide an easy method of identifying changes in population characteristics over three census years. Profiles are available on the ABS website, or through the ABS consultancy service by telephoning **1300 135 070**.

Tourist Accommodation, Small Area Data, was released on 20/12/02. This electronic publication is released quarterly and contains data for tourist accommodation establishments, capacity, employment, occupancy rates and takings from accommodation for each tourist region as well as selected small areas. Publications are available for each State and catalogue numbers commence with the first four digits of 8635 ( eg 8635.1.40.001 is the NSW publication). Publications can be ordered on-line by selecting the publication required from the catalogue of publications.

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## What's happening in Local Government Finance

A major outcome of the Review of the ABS Relationship with Local Government was the centralising of responsibility for local government statistics in the Local Government Statistics Unit (LGSU) in the ABS' Brisbane office. The unit is headed up by Director, Tara Pritchard who leads a team dedicated to understanding the needs of the sector and assisting Local Governments with their data provision responsibilities.

Agreement has been reached with Local Government Grants Commissions (GC) and/or Local Government Departments (DLG) in each state and territory that they will assume responsibility for gathering financial data from councils on an annual basis. Data will then be passed on to the LGSU once the GC/DLG has drawn off its requirements. This approach will decrease the overall reporting load of councils - a major goal of the ABS.

In addition to annual data obtained from the GC/DLG, a selection of data items is sought from a sample of local government councils and trading enterprises on a quarterly basis. This information is gathered directly by the ABS on a completely electronic basis. Regardless of their state of location, all units in this survey receive an identical spreadsheet containing a limited range of well-defined data items. There has been a very positive response to this approach which appears to suit councils and trading enterprises well. The vast majority of responding units have been providing thoughtful and timely information - a situation of benefit to all.

The LGSU is currently developing a classification to be used in analysing the purposes or functions of local government financial transactions. The Local Government Purpose Classification (LGPC) will seek to provide a classification framework for local government units which is closely suited to the activities of local government. It is intended that the LGPC be highly relevant so as to give it wide acceptance throughout the sector thus supporting the ABS' aim of greater standardisation of local government statistics for comparability purposes. The classification is in its later stages of development and a draft is soon to be provided to key users for comment. This is scheduled to occur during April and May when the classification will be formally presented to most Local Government Grants Commissions and/or Local Government Departments for their consideration. At the same time there will be a series of presentations made at the various state offices of the ABS to further explain the new classification and its impact on the Local Government Sector. (Details of these can be obtained from the contacts listed below.)

Apart from Building Approvals data, the LGSU is working towards processing the majority of the ABS' data requirements from the Local Government Sector through the Unit rather than multiple approaches from the ABS. This will have obvious benefits in terms of enabling more effective management of providers and the

obligations placed upon them. Standardisation of statistical concepts as they relate to local government will also be a beneficial outcome. Concentration in this manner will also serve to deepen ABS expertise in all matters local government which will in turn yield further benefits to the sector.

## Contacts

Director : Tara Pritchard [[tara.pritchard@abs.gov.au](mailto:tara.pritchard@abs.gov.au) (07) 3222 6257]

Assistant Director : Dean Bloom [[dean.bloom@abs.gov.au](mailto:dean.bloom@abs.gov.au) (07) 3222 6404]

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## Future articles in Local Government and ABS

- How do I find data for areas smaller than States?
- How do I know what's in a publication?
- The Regional Statistics Program
- Statistical Terms and what they mean

## Local Government Sector Account Manager

Jeff Bulger had been appointed to the position of Local Government Sector Account Manager.

If you would like to discuss any issues related to the provision of statistics and the use of statistics by the Local Government sector please contact Jeff. He can be contacted at [jeff.bulger@abs.gov.au](mailto:jeff.bulger@abs.gov.au) or telephone (08) 82377621.

The ABS National Information and Referral Service remains the preferred point of contact regarding statistical information. Their telephone number is **1300 135 070**.

## Newsletter Contact Details

This newsletter is one way to help improve communication between the ABS and the Local Government Sector. New initiatives to assist Local Government organisations will be announced in this newsletter as they evolve. We would like your views and suggestions about this newsletter so that it is useful and assists you to use statistics. Please email comments to the Local Government Sector Account Manager, [jeff.bulger@abs.gov.au](mailto:jeff.bulger@abs.gov.au) or telephone (08) 82377621

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